

City of Northampton, MA
Transportation and Parking Commission

April 10, 2018

MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by: Beth A. Willard

1. Councilor Jim Nash called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and announced that there would be audio/video recording of this meeting.

Members present and absent/introductions:

Member	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Councilor Jim Nash, Chair	X	
Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Vice Chair	X	
Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director	X	
Jody Kasper, Chief of Police	X	
Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability	X	
David Pomerantz, Director of Central Services	X	
Christa Grenat, Citizen	X	
Gary Hartwell, Citizen	X	
Rich Cooper, Citizen	X	
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	Absent	
Alan Verson, Citizen	X	
Staff	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement	X	
Maggie Chan, Traffic Engineer	X	
Beth A. Willard, DPW Clerk	X	

2. Public comment:

- Betty Wilson of 105 Fern Street requested traffic calming measures be applied to Oak Street in Florence. It is used heavily by students going to and from the middle school, as well as heavily used as a cut-through to Bridge Road by vehicles that frequently exceed the speed limit. Children are frequently walking in the street, and she is concerned about the possibility of a pedestrian-vehicle accident. Councilor Nash used this opportunity to introduce & discuss the on line application process for making requests for traffic and parking issues (which Ms. Wilson used). He also suggested she contact the middle school about educating students concerning walking on the sidewalk as opposed to in the streets. Ms. Wilson replied that she has spoken with the assistant principal. Councilor Nash replied

that he, Councilor Sciarra, and the Department of Public Works were in discussion about the situation, and would bring the Councilor from that Ward on board as well.

3. Approval of minutes from the previous meeting:

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the February 13, 2018 meeting.	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Wayne Feiden	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0

4. Reports from Departments and Subcommittees/Announcements/Presentations:

- Department of Public Works (DPW) Updates – Director Donna LaScaleia:
 - Projects from Previous Year
 - a. Audubon Road – final paving is anticipated for the end of this month.
 - b. Day Avenue – final paving anticipated for end of this month/early May;
 - Holyoke Street - Remains closed. Construction continues, final paving is slated for early May. Some utility work is being done now;
 - Hinckley Street - Water & Sewer work continuing. Reconstruction expected to continue through the summer;
 - Traffic Signal Upgrades – One of capital projects from last year – upgrade at the intersection of Bridge Road and Jackson Street, with process of design of controls started;
 - Pavement Memo for 2019 – has been submitted to the Mayor’s Office for 2019, and is on the website:
 - a. Paving sections of Pleasant Street, Hampton Avenue, Chesterfield Road, Wright Avenue, & Fulton Avenue this construction season. Burts Pit Road is planned, but engineering and permits process may stretch it into 2019;
 - Signal Light at Old South Street and Main Street –
 - a. Citizen concerns have been received about pedestrian safety in the crosswalk as cars attempt to make a right hand turn from Main onto Old South Street. The interim plan is to introduce a leading pedestrian interval which will hold the traffic slightly (3 seconds), allowing pedestrians into crosswalk where they can be seen by motorists. MassDOT has hired a design firm for traffic signal upgrades along Route 9 from Northampton to Amherst, and will look at this intersection as part of their project;
- Department of Planning & Sustainability Updates – Director Wayne Feiden:
 - Bids have been opened on the sidewalk improvements on City Hall campus, including a sidewalk extension on the Main Street side of City Hall. Expecting a mid-May start;
 - Public forum on Crackerbarrel Alley is planned for April 17, 2018 to get input on which direction to proceed with respect to this area.
 - Valley Bike Share expected to start in June:
 - a. Stations have been started – electrical work has been done, but concrete pads are not done yet. Vendors are expected to start installing on pads in May. The system should be open in mid-June, with some stations not up and running until later in the year.

5. Matters before the Commission:

- a. Presentation on Multi-Use trail plan - Department of Planning and Sustainability – Director Wayne Feiden:
- Presentation of the Open Space, Recreation, and Multi-Use Trail Plan, starting with a short history and slides. There are 12 big actions of that plan, of which one is the Multi-Use Trail Plan – he is asking for an endorsement by the Transportation and Parking Commission of only that section. Within that, there are 4 subsections:
 - a. Bicycle infrastructure:
 - i. The Bike share program, part of which is the introduction of pedal assist bicycles;
 - ii. Enhanced bike lanes (cycle tracks) & how they lead into bike trails – first 400 feet of Pleasant Street is done, the southern part of King Street is planned;
 - iii. Bike repair stations, bike zoning, bike lockers – there are new bike lockers at the Roundhouse, two bike repair stations planned;
 - b. Major trail expansions over the next 5 to 10 years; current expansions are designed within new developments to fit to the master plan – an example is the Rocky Hill complex with a bike trail in the woods, which eventually will link into the trail system. Four major trail expansions planned:
 - i. Extending graveled bikeway to Williamsburg line this summer; Williamsburg to extend on their side to South Main Street;
 - ii. Rocky Hill Greenway, Route 10 to Route 66, and Ryan Road trail to the elementary school;
 - iii. Damon Road Multi-Use trail – the 2022 rebuild of Damon Road by the state will include a trail from Bridge Street to the state bike path planned for next year and extended to River Run about 3 years later;
 - iv. Bikeway will extend north to Elm Court in Hatfield at a future date.
 - c. Improve access to trails – areas such as downtown to King Street and the Veterans Affairs Hospital to Mulberry St have no on/off access to the bike trail, so new access locations are proposed for:
 - i. Edwards Square – pave & connect to trail;
 - ii. Burts Pit Road – bypass trail to connect to one at Village Hill Complex;
 - iii. Hotel Bridge, Leeds area;
 - iv. Florence Street, Leeds between Look Park entrance and Leeds School;
 - v. Hebert Avenue, connector;
 - vi. Riverbank Road – extend from state trail either under Coolidge Bridge or off a possible roundabout at the Route 91/Bridge Street intersection;
 - vii. Blackberry Lane – pave a section from the dead end into the bike trail.
 - d. Director Feiden requested the formal endorsement of the Transportation and Parking Commission.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To Endorse the Multi-Use Trail Plan	Gary Hartwell	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0

Councilor Nash stated that the order of the matters was re-arranged from the listing on the agenda: Item e). was moved to a position after Item b).

b. Chief Jody Kasper – Intersection of Maple & Pine

- a. Four-way intersection with lots of complaints and accidents recorded - 26 accidents last year at that location. Apparently visibility down the hill to the south was not a factor. Of the accidents, 23% did not stop at the stop signs on Pine Street, and 23% thought it was a four-way stop. All of the accidents occurred between 7 a.m. & 7 p.m. (daylight), suggesting that additional signage may be indicated. Director LaScaleia requested the data, and said the DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS would look into the issue.
- b. Councilor Sciarra questioned whether Mann Terrace traffic was an issue, Chief Kasper replied it was not. Director Pomeranz asked if traffic data was available for the location, and did it indicate any increase in volume or speed. Director LaScaleia replied that any data on the location would be over 2 years old.
- c. Richard Cooper asked about the process for creating a four-way stop. Director LaScaleia replied that certain criteria must be met, including volume from all directions and crash data. Chief Kasper pointed out that in this instance, the hill to the south would create a problem in the winter, as cars coming to a stop might have difficulty proceeding in icy conditions and could potentially slide backward.
- d. Director Feiden and Richard Cooper both mentioned traffic problems exist on the eastern portion of Pine Street and the intersection of Pine and South Main Street as well. Councilor Nash asked if the DPW could look into these issues, which Director LaScaleia replied would be done. Becky Francis of Pine Street, a member of the public attending the meeting, thanked the Transportation and Parking Commission for looking into the issue.

c. Hatfield Street traffic calming application review of assessment report:

- a. History & recommendation of application submitted in July 2017. Speed check - July 2016 counter recorded a daily average of 6540 vehicles (.75 - 1.2% trucks) 85% of vehicles averaged 40 – 46 mph in a 30 MPH zone;
- b. The Hatfield-North King Street Roundabout project is at 75% design completion. This is a significant MassDOT project;
- c. Several pedestrian improvements are proposed as part of the MassDOT project; including new sidewalk on the east side of Hatfield Street from North King Street to existing one at Cooke Avenue, and several cross walks with the flashing pedestrian lights, with MassDOT paying for the pedestrian improvements;
- d. Construction is slated for 2019;
- e. DPW recommendation in the interim is to line stripe the road, as it has been shown to reduce traffic speeds, planning to edge stripe the lanes from North King to Cooke Avenue Councilor Nash asked about striping from Cooke Avenue to Bridge Road Director LaScaleia said it does end at the Cooke Avenue intersection. Councilor Nash thought there might be line of sight issues as well, such as shrubs, and wondered if that issue had been resolved. An unidentified woman in the audience stated that the shrubs at the apartments had been moved to correct that situation;

- f. Director Feiden mentioned that MassDOT would be handling right of way acquisitions, which would remove that financial burden from the city;
 - g. Expect a 2020 start date;
 - h. Councilor Sciarra asked if speeds were measured from Cooke Avenue to Bridge Road. Engineer Chan said she set up the counter at an area a bit north of Cooke Avenue because of the curve in the road;
 - i. Director Feiden mentioned that when the nursing home property at the intersection of Hatfield Street and Bridge Road finally sells, we will have to address that intersection as well. Councilor Nash asked about speeds in the roundabout. Director Feiden responded that it would be 25 MPH;
 - j. Kim Jerold of Pines Edge Condominiums, a member of the audience, asked about replacing speed limit signs on Hatfield Street – one at the North King end, the other at the Bridge Road end. Both are 30 MPH signs, both are very old and faded. Director LaScaleia said the DPW will look into that;
 - k. Councilor Nash recognized Kim Jerold as the individual who spearheaded this application.
- d. Discussion of Tess Poe letter:
- a. Councilor Nash introduced a letter from Ms. Poe, who is on the Planning Board, as well as running a business downtown. An older customer at her business fell twice because of snow around the parking meter she was trying to feed. She made several recommendations;
 - b. Discussion – Councilor Sciarra pointed out that there is an app now, so there is not a need to access a meter. Nancy Forrestall explained that all meters have a zone designation. Can use the app, put in the zone number, time, and leave the car. Director Feiden asked about kiosks and multi-space status. Director Pomerantz replied kiosks are planned at Pleasant Street, Crafts Avenue, Main Street, and the Trestle at the Bike Path. They are doing six this year. Perhaps a change in the ordinance about shoveling was needed. Chief Kasper thought perhaps a requirement to shovel a path to access the meters from the street was needed. Ms. Forrestall replied that cut throughs are provided. Money can be inserted from the sidewalk side of the meter, and this is within the area that businesses are required to clear. Chief Kasper suggested that it may be an educational issue. Ms. Forrestall added that the parking officers do report unshoveled areas, and it is policy that if one cannot get safely to a meter, a parking ticket is not issued. Councilor Nash pointed out that in the circumstance mentioned, the person did receive a ticket. Ms. Forrestall replied that all issued tickets have pictures. The day in question had been searched, and that particular car could not be identified. Anyone receiving a ticket can appeal and contact the Parking Division to get options, and that can even be done online;
 - c. Councilor Nash asked what actions the Commission should take:
 - i. Does the ordinance need to be changed? Ms. Forrestall mentioned that in a snow emergency, information on parking downtown goes out as well. The question is whether the businesses are following the full requirements of the ordinance;

- ii. Councilor Nash asked what the response to Ms. Poe should be. Councilor Sciarra - respond to her and let her know that the person ticketed can appeal it. Ms. Forrestall added that people should use the cut throughs that are provided at regular intervals, and Councilor Sciarra also suggested that the police be contacted if there is a problem. Councilor Nash said he would communicate the information to Ms. Poe.

e. Discussion of 25 MPH speed limit education plan:

- a. There is a proposed idea of accepting the new rules from the state allowing the designation of 25 MPH for areas within the municipality that are not posted. This was discussed by the DPW, the Mayor, & Councilor O'Donnell. The best idea was to put together an education plan ahead of time;
- b. Councilor Nash was given the task of creating a plan, and thought that citizen members should be a part of the process. Both Christa Grenat and Gary Hartwell indicated their willingness to be involved. Councilor Nash proposed creating a subcommittee, having a public meeting, putting together a plan, and bringing it back for approval by the Committee, and then forwarding it to City Council for their consideration;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To create a subcommittee to formulate a 25 MPH speed limit education plan.	James Nash	David Pomerantz	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To appoint James Nash, Christa Grenat, and Gary Hartwell as representatives of the Transportation and Parking Commission on the subcommittee.	James Nash	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0

- c. Councilor Sciarra asked about a time frame. Councilor Nash replied that he was thinking about a fall roll out of the plan, possibly for the start of school. Director LaScaleia offered the technical assistance of the DPW to the subcommittee.

f. Parking Zone change request for Hooker Avenue:

- a. Engineer Maggie Chan of the DPW highlighted the new parking request form on the City website;
- b. Ms. Chan gave a brief history of the request – currently there is no parking 11:00 P.M. to 5:00 A.M. A car parked in the zone was towed, therefore the request to remove the zone was made. Chief Kasper asked why the zone was there. Ms. Chan said it was quite old, and could find no official reason for it. The signs for the zone are old and faded to the point of being unreadable;
- c. Discussion - Councilor Nash suggested a positive recommendation from the Transportation and Parking commission, as the King Street side will still be a no parking zone. Councilor Sciarra questioned whether there was sufficient room

available for cars to get by if the zone change was made, and if perhaps that may have been the original reason for it. Chief Kasper said an ambulance couldn't get through. Ms. Chan replied that the no parking zone is only for 11:00 P.M. to 5:00 A.M. Cars can park there during the day. Councilor Sciarra indicated reluctance to change it without knowing why it was instituted in the first place. Ms. Chan said the hours seemed strange, as it doesn't match anything in the area, and it predates 1987. Councilor Sciarra questioned whether there was any other input from residents on the street. Engineer Chan said that two other residents has spoken for the change;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To make a positive recommendation to City Council regarding "18.XXX An Ordinance Relative To Parking On Hooker Avenue".	Wayne Feiden	Jody Kasper	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0

g. Parking Zone change request for Vernon Street, from Elm to Jewett:

- a. Engineer Maggie Chan gave a brief history of the request – after a snowstorm, there was parking on both sides of the street, making it difficult for vehicles to get through. A request was received that parking be allowed on one side of the street only;
- b. Discussion – Chief Kasper asked if the parking on one side of the street could be designated for winter months only. Ms. Forrestall replied that there were no seasonal zones in the city. There was discussion of preserving parking, as the street is believed to be used for parking by individuals connected with the High School & Smith, as well as residents.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To make a positive recommendation to City Council regarding "18.XXX An Ordinance Relative To Parking On Vernon Street".	David Pomerantz	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0

h. Discussion regarding provision of documents associated with TPC Agendas for Commission members;

Ms. Beth A. Kaplowitt, the recording clerk for the Transportation and Parking Commission, placed the documents for this meeting on line for the committee members, hoping availability on line would provide time for the members to peruse the documents at their leisure in preparation for the meetings. Councilor Sciarra asked if it would be possible to link all pertinent documents to the agenda, as was done with the Tess Poe letter. Director LaScaleia noted it allows the DPW to move away from providing printed packs, as the DPW now pays per page for copies. Councilor Nash remarked that it appeared to be working well, and thanked DPW staff for their role in implementing the change.

i. The next Transportation and Parking Commission meeting is scheduled on May 15, 2018 at 4:00 P.M. in Council Chambers;

- a. Councilor Nash requested that the subcommittee on the 25 MPH speed limit education plan meet after adjournment

6. NEW BUSINESS - None

7. Adjourned at 5:17 P.M.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
Adjourn	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Jody Kasper	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0